



## Student Curators Lesson Plan<sup>1</sup>

The Student Curator program encourages problem-solving skills using hands-on activities. Students learn to develop, install, and interpret an exhibition by touring our local museum, conducting research, and completing various activities.

For this particular exhibition, students will focus on “Play: Yesterday and Today.” Students were asked to find information about games, toys, and other entertainments children enjoyed in the past.

- Interview a much older person – a grandmother or grandfather; another older relative or friend. The following question may be used to start the conversation.
  - *Did you have a favorite toy when you were my age?*
  - *What kinds of games did you like to play?*
  - *What kind of music did you like? How did you listen to your music?*
- Compare their answer with something you like to play with.
  - *What is your favorite toy?*
  - *What kind of games do you like to play?*
  - *What kind of music do you like?*

### Introduction

- First, collect data on the students’ previous museum experiences by asking.
  - *How many of you have been to a museum?*
  - *What did you see?*
  - *What did you do?*
- Next have the students create a list of reasons that museums exist.
- Then have the students create a list of reasons that schools exist.
- Ask, what museums and schools have in common?
  - *Do museums and schools share some of the same goals?*  
Both share the goal to educate, research, preserve, and interpret culture and history.
- How are museums and schools different?
  - Museums contain original or “primary” source artifacts.
  - Schools usually have reproductions or secondary source materials.

### Student Curators: an interactive learning experience

Students actively engage in learning by participating in the creation of an exhibit. As “student curators” they will select, organize, and look after the items in the exhibit.

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<sup>1</sup> Lesson adapted from Peggy Koetsch  
Journal of Folklore and Educations (2016: Vol 3)  
“Student Curators Demonstrate Learning by Transforming Schools into Museum”



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**Basic Components** of the project:

- *A Title/ Theme*
- *An Object,*
- *Supporting Details,*
- *An Activity (optional)*

**The Title/Theme** – is a clue to what information students want visitors to know as a result of touring their exhibit.

**The Object** – is a focal point that makes the information tangible. It could be created or collected to be displayed.

- ➔ If the object is borrowed, special handling and care will be needed.  
Identify the owner of the object (if known). Write a brief description of the object.

**EX:** *“This baby doll belongs to Mary Smith, my grandmother. It is approximately 53 years old. The doll has a pink dress, socks and only one shoe. It is about 18” long with red curly hair. The eyes open and shut.”*

- ➔ The owner of the object will need to inform the student about when, where, and how the object was acquired.

**EX:** *“This was my first baby doll, I named it Shirley. It was given to me by my Aunt Polly for my third birthday, which was 53 years ago. We were living in Midland, Texas at the time. I carried my doll Shirley everywhere. She used to have two shoes, but now has only one. One day I decided to cut her hair and that is why there is a chunk of hair missing. My mom got mad at me for cutting the doll’s hair and I remember her taking it away from me for a few days to make her point.”*

**The Supporting Details** – place the information in context: it could include quotes, descriptions, an installation, a performance or a demonstration.

**The Activity** (optional) – engages the visitors with the information. It’s based upon how students want the targeted audience for the exhibit to learn. It could be a game, an examination of an artifact, a creative endeavor, or a challenge for the visitor to solve.

**Installation**

After all of the components are gathered, the student will set up displays. The space should be large enough to have room for the student curators to give tours and where visitors can engage in the activities.

- Students rehearse giving tours to each other.  
The act of asking and answering questions strengthens both the student curators’ and visitors’ knowledge.



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### **Time Factor**

The time needed to do this project depends upon a few factors:

- What kind of help do students need to create or collect artifacts and to complete the installation?
- How long is the space available for the installation?

### **Skills Developed**

At the beginning of the project most students cannot describe or comprehend what a museum curator does.

- The skills that a curator uses to create an exhibit include mastery of the subject matter, creativity, flexibility and the ability to work independently as well as in a team.
- Students earn the title “student curator” by researching, collecting, creating, categorizing, exhibiting, and interpreting primary and secondary resources.
- Students exchange information with family members and friends who have firsthand knowledge or experience, using their best interpersonal communication strategies.
- In conducting tours, the students ask and respond to questions, exercising their listening and communication skills.
- The process empowers students to investigate and learn. They become a subject matter “expert” who is capable of sharing information with their team members and eventually the visitors.
- The teams write down the pertinent facts that they want visitors to learn as a result of touring their exhibits.
- The teacher will act as a “coach” for the team – facilitating the students’ exploration of the subject matter.

### **Connecting/Collaborating**

By working together to solve problems as they arise, students form a team mentality.

- Brainstorming multiple solutions allows students to discover their strengths.
- Team members may have different strengths, but each one can be used in accomplishing their goal.

**EX:** If a student is shy and reluctant to speak, they may need some assistance from their more verbal teammates. With practice and encouragement, the less verbal students will become more comfortable speaking in front of a group.

### **Assessing**

The goal for this program is to encourage students to use multiple intelligences and critical-thinking skills.

- Students’ interaction provides an opportunity for open-ended discussions.
- Working and creating together instills a sense of teamwork and pride.
- Students learn how to conduct research and how to share that knowledge with one another.
- Using their different problem-solving skills, concepts, and learning strategies, the students assume the role of a teacher.



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- ➔ Once the project is complete, ask the students to reflect upon their experience.
  - What could they do to improve their presentation?
    - Did something work well?
    - Did something not work well?
    - What part of the process did you enjoy the most?
    - What part of the process did you enjoy the least?